

Remarks by Donald C. Winter
Secretary of the Navy
USS INDEPENDENCE (LCS 2)
Christening Ceremony
Austal Shipyard
Mobile, Alabama
Saturday, October 4, 2008

Senator Sessions, Congressman Bonner, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be with you today as we christen USS INDEPENDENCE.

Littoral Combat Ship is a timely response to one of the evolving challenges we face—the need to provide presence in the littorals around the world.

The threats to our interests in the littorals come in many forms and they are global, ranging from terrorist attacks using small boats; to mine warfare in strategically sensitive areas; to diesel submarines emanating from rogue nations; to pirates off the coast of Somalia and elsewhere around the globe.

In this context, we would do well to fully recognize how potentially vulnerable the global economy is to maritime threats.

The world's system of trade—90 percent of which is transported by sea—is so tightly integrated that minor shocks and interruptions can have dramatic, instantaneous effects that reverberate worldwide.

For example, an unsuccessful terrorist attack on an oil platform in the North Arabian Gulf in April 2004 sent world oil prices and insurance rates soaring—within days—costing the world's economy billions of dollars, even though no damage was done to the platform.

More recently, unrest and instability in the Nigerian Delta have added to the rising cost of oil.

The lesson is clear—the security of critical resources is prey to a variety of threats, from piracy to the frequently voiced threats made by terrorists and rogue nations.

Indeed, just over a week ago Somali pirates seized a Ukrainian vessel laden with military weaponry.

This seizure follows a growing trend of pirate attacks that are disrupting critical sea lines of communication.

These developments are a source of concern that extends far beyond East Africa, for such attacks are taking place close to major choke points of maritime commerce such as the Suez Canal.

Pirates are becoming more aggressive, better armed, and ever more audacious in their depredations against commercial shipping.

This incident with the Ukrainian ship FAINA—given the possible role of its cargo in arming rebel groups in Africa—underscores the point that maritime threats can have a worldwide impact not only on the global economy, but on the political and security domains as well.

With a multi-mission platform such as LCS, we are making investments in capabilities to meet these challenges.

USS INDEPENDENCE will play a pioneering role in our Nation's effort to protect our interests, and to ensure the stability of the global economy.

For those of you who will have the privilege to serve in her, your ship's name carries special significance in carrying on a distinguished legacy as the sixth U.S. Navy warship to be called USS INDEPENDENCE.

The first Independence was a 10-gun sloop that served during the War of Independence.

The second USS INDEPENDENCE was called upon in 1815 to deter Barbary pirates from preying upon American merchant commerce.

Three more Navy ships named Independence followed, with distinguished service in defense of the Nation from 1919 through Operation Desert Storm.

The future USS INDEPENDENCE will build on her illustrious past, and honor American communities from coast to coast that bear the name "Independence."

In so doing, this ship acknowledges the enduring foundation of our Nation.

Indeed, the word "independence" embodies what the Founding Fathers came to regard as "the glorious cause."

Declaring our independence was not enough.

We had to fight for it.

One of our Nation's greatest orators—Daniel Webster—upon the deaths of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson—captured eloquently the spirit of independence that has

guided this country since its birth:

“It is my living sentiment, and by the blessing of God it shall be my dying sentiment—Independence now and Independence forever.”

With this ship, you now have the opportunity to help preserve the hard-won independence of our Founding generation, and the generations which have followed in their footsteps.

May God bless this ship, the Sailors who serve in her, and may God continue to bless America.